

State of Connecticut

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

STATE CAPITOL

HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

August 25, 2008

U.S. Department of Homeland Security,
Science and Technology Directorate
James V. Johnson
Mail Stop #2100
245 Murray Lane, SW
Building 410
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Sir,

We are writing to challenge the proposal to upgrade the Plum Island Animal Disease Center (NY) to a Biosafety Level 4 facility in order to meet the agency's expanding research needs.

Frankly, we were surprised to learn last year that Plum Island was back in consideration as a potential site for the new National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility. Your agency had originally eliminated Plum Island from the selection process, noting that it would be less expensive to build a new facility on the mainland. Plum Island, according to the DHS, suffered from multiple facility limitations—not enough space, 50-year-old infrastructure, and an insufficient BSL rating.

But now, according to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, Plum Island is a front-runner for the new NBAF site. As co-Chairs of Connecticut's Long Island Sound Liquefied Natural Gas Task Force, we learned that a Draft EIS is not always a totally neutral investigative document. Results can be skewed and findings highlighted or sublimated, according to the underlying directive. But we also learned that true risks can be ferreted out from the pages of documentation and the right decision can ultimately be made.

For example, the reason given for Plum Island's new favored status as a finalist in the site search is that, according to the pathogen-release scenario used to evaluate site safety, the economic losses from a foot and mouth disease virus release would be lower at Plum Island than at most of the other potential sites. But we must point out—and insist—that

economics should not be the sole deciding factor in a decision affecting the health and safety of the people living and traveling in the area.

The Plum Island site is located in the country's most densely populated metropolitan region, which is home to some of the world's largest transportation networks. These include major international airports and rail hubs, domestic marine transportation and worldwide shipping channels, and congested interstate highway systems. We are gravely concerned that you have ignored the possibility of widespread transmission of diseases, both regionally and internationally, which have no known vaccine or therapy.

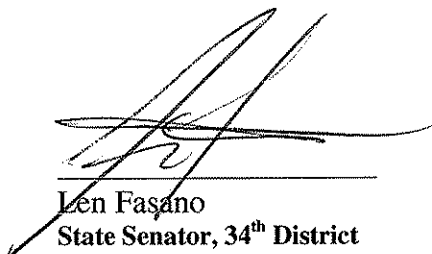
In addition, DHS must consider the proximity of Plum Island to New York City, the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, Millstone Nuclear Power Plant, Electric Boat shipyard, and the Naval Submarine Base, New London. Upgrading Plum Island to BSL-4 would increase its "value" to terrorists—and this small section of the East Coast is already carrying more than its fair share of potential terrorist targets.

We urge you to remove the Plum Island Animal Disease Center from the list of potential sites for the new BSL-4 National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility.

Sincerely,



Andrea Stillman
State Senator, 20th District



Len Fasano
State Senator, 34th District

cc: M. Jodi Rell, Governor
Richard Blumenthal, Attorney General
Donald Williams, Senate President Pro Tempore
Martin Looney, Senate Majority Leader
John McKinney, Senate Minority Leader